

Learning Point Associates Gives Chicago Afterschool Programs a Boost

Crown Community Academy Starts From Scratch

Carol McElvain, senior program associate and an afterschool expert at Learning Point Associates, appreciates quality programs and uses them to illustrate best practices for clients wishing to institute afterschool programs. McElvain consulted on a new program at Crown Community Academy, a Chicago Public School with students in kindergarten through eighth grade, 79 percent of who are eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch. Using the *Beyond the Bell* toolkit developed by Learning Point Associates as a framework, Crown Academy assembled a modest series of afterschool offerings that flourished into a full-blown program.

Today, Crown Academy offers a variety of structured activities—both in the performing arts such as dance, drama, and music as well as computer graphics, creative writing, and reading. “Learning Point Associates helped us create parent and community surveys when we began formulating our plan for afterschool programming here,” explains Jason Lambert, resource coordinator for Crown Academy, a grantee under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Horace Greeley Elementary Taps Broad Array of Community Talents for Enrichment

Some students run out the door when the last bell rings, ending the school day at Horace Greeley Elementary on Chicago’s economically diverse North Side. But others opt to stay for afterschool programs, where they learn to dance, perform in the band, paint a mural, or join the basketball team.

Greeley Elementary Principal Haydee Alvarez and her staff have toiled after hours to develop this popular program of academic and artistic enrichment, with Learning Point Associates providing technical assistance and professional development.

What’s the biggest challenge? Funding, of course. Greeley’s program receives a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant from the U.S. Department of Education. With about 92 percent of Greeley students characterized as living in “low-income” families and the majority of them English language learners, their parents can ill afford to pay for programs. Principal Alvarez has tapped into cultural organizations’ outreach programs and won foundation grants to support activities such as dance lessons taught by members of the acclaimed Hubbard Street Dance Chicago group.